Nine shot dead, two abducted in Balochistan

By Ali Jan Mangi and Abdul Wahid Shahwani

DERA MURAD JAMALI/KHUZDAR: Nine people were killed in firing incidents, and two others were abducted in the districts of Kalat, Nasirabad, and Jhal Magsi in Balochistan on Saturday.

In Kalat district's Khaliqabad area, four people, including tribal leader Shakir Saadullah Langove and his brother Shakir Khairullah Langove, were gunned down when unidentified assailants opened fire in the Sarbund area.

According to Levies sources, the other two victims were identified as Muhammad Karim and Muhammad Zahir. The attackers fled the scene after the assault, and authorities have launched an investigation.

Two gunned down

In another firing incident, two persons were killed in the Shpistan area of Panjgur.

Police said that unknown armed men riding a motorbike opened fire and killed the two individuals, who were identified as Muhammad Zafar and Muhammad Naeem. Their bodies were shifted to the district hospital. The cause of the killings is not known so far.

Two drivers abducted

In Dera Murad Jamali, two excavator drivers working for a construction company were abducted at gunpoint by unidentified armed men near the Notal police station area of Nasirabad district.

The victims, Aashiq Ali Mohammad Hasni and Shakeel Ahmed Korai, were kidnapped near Rabi Canal Sufi Wah, while their machinery was left behind. Police and security forces have launched a search operation to recover them.

Separately, in Kachhi district, Abdul Qadir Kurd was killed by armed assailants who opened fire in Goth Misri Khan. The perpetrators escaped after the attack. Police shifted the body to a hospital for medico-legal formalities before handing it over to the family.

In Jhal Magsi district, a land dispute between the Solangi and Wazdani Magsi tribes turned deadly when an exchange of fire broke out in the Hathyari area. One man, Muhammad Bachal Magsi, was killed in the clash. The administration quickly reached the site and brought the situation under control.

Meanwhile, in Dalbandin (Chagai district), prominent tribal leader Sardar Hussain was shot dead by unidentified gunmen near the district headquarters. His body was shifted to Prince Fahad Hospital for post-mortem examination. Police collected evidence from the scene and began an investigation, though the motive behind the attack remains unclear.

Law enforcement officials noted that several shooting incidents in Chagai district alone this month have claimed four lives, increasing fear among local residents. The wave of killings, tribal clashes, and abductions across Balochistan in recent days has once again drawn attention to the province's fragile security situation and the urgent need for stronger law enforcement measures.

Behram Baloch in Gwadar also contributed to this report

QUETTA: A visitor shows keen interest in a book at a stall during the Iqbal Literacy Festival organised by Iran's culture centre, Khana-i-Farhang, on Saturday.—PPI

FIA nabs two over hawala business, seizes currency

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) conducted a raid in Quetta on Saturday and arrested two suspects allegedly involved in illegal money exchange and hawala/hundi business.

FIA authorities also seized large amounts of local and foreign currency during the operation.

According to an FIA Balochistan spokesperson, the raid led to the arrest of two suspects identified as Muhammad Musa and Muhammad Ali. Officials recovered $6,100 and over Rs4.35 million from their possession.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the accused were running an unlicensed currency exchange business and were actively involved in hawala and hundi transactions. The FIA also confiscated mobile phones and other evidence related to their illegal financial activities.

A case has been registered against the arrested individuals, and further investigation is underway.

51 more cases filed as part of anti-smog action

By Imran Gabol

LAHORE: The Punjab police have registered 51 new cases against environmental violators as part of their ongoing campaign to control smog and reduce air pollution across the province, a spokesperson said on Saturday.

The crackdown, which spanned Lahore and other districts over the last 24 hours, led to the arrest of the violators and resulted in fines totaling over Rs1.067 million imposed on 491 people. An additional 38 individuals were issued warnings for environmental violations.

According to the breakdown provided by the spokesperson, the operations targeted key sources of pollution. A total of 209 smoke-emitting vehicles were cited, alongside 101 incidents of crop residue burning and 7 violations related to brick kilns.

This recent enforcement action is part of a larger, year-long initiative.

The spokesperson revealed that since the beginning of the current year, the police have registered a significant 2,275 cases and arrested 2,027 violators. The financial penalties have been substantial, with fines exceeding Rs227.1m imposed on 87,780 individuals, while 11,268 others have received warnings.

The annual data highlights the scale of the problem, with 52,872 violations for smoke-emitting vehicles, 3,365 for brick kilns, 1,725 related to industrial activities, and 1,166 cases of crop residue burning.

IG police Dr Usman Anwar has directed officers to further accelerate the anti-smog crackdown.

In his directives, the IG emphasised a zero-tolerance policy, ordering strict and immediate action against all those found violating the standard operating procedures (SOPs) designed to combat smog. The operations are to be intensified on highways, in industrial areas, on agricultural lands, and at other key locations contributing to poor air quality.

One chief to rule all military services

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change will streamline decision-making and enhance unified command.

However, critics see it as institutional capture. "By placing an army officer as the Chief of Defence Forces with authority over the Air Force and Navy, the proposed system invites institutional imbalance and potential disaster," warns retired Lt Gen Asif Yasin Malik, a former defence secretary.

"This amendment appears tailored to benefit a specific individual rather than to strengthen the defence structure," he adds.

The criticism cuts to the core of the country's military culture — the deep-seated rivalries among the Army, Air Force, and Navy, each guarding its operational turf and doctrine.

The Air Force and Navy have long resisted attempts to subordinate their autonomy under land-centric command.

Harmonising these distinct traditions — air power's rapid, decentralised decision cycles versus the army's hierarchical chain of command — has historically been the Achilles' heel of every "joint" reform effort.

A critical question under the new system is who would control transfers, postings, and promotions in the Air Force and Navy.

Would the two service chiefs readily cede that authority? Dr Mazari cautions that if promotions in the Air Force and Navy were to be decided by an army-origin CDF, it "could lead to festering resentments and affect morale in the long run".

She raises another hypothetical scenario: "What if there is a Marshal of the Air Force or Admiral of the Fleet while the COAS is a four-star general — will they then be under a four-star army officer if the latter is the CDF?" she asks. "Too much has been left to ad hoc and arbitrary decisions."

Equally consequential is the proposal to create a Commander of the National Strategic Command, a position overseeing the country's nuclear forces.

Under the amendment, the commander would be appointed by the prime minister on the army chief's recommendation and must be chosen from within the army.

That subtle shift moves control of the country's most sensitive assets away from the collegial National Command Authority (NCA), designed to ensure civilian oversight and inter-service balance, toward a single service.

Dr Mazari warns the change could have grave operational implications.

"Effectively, all nuclear weapons and delivery systems will be under the army's control, including second-strike missiles which normally fall under naval command," she says.

"This could lead to command-and-control problems and time delays, especially in a war-like situation."

Her concerns recall a rare moment of institutional dissent — the 2019 National Security Committee meeting after the Balakot strikes — when, according to retired Lt Gen Malik, the then-army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa advised restraint but was reportedly overruled by the air chief and the CJCSC.

"Under the proposed arrangement, would such dissent, and the powerful response it ensured, even be possible?" he asks pointedly.

Perhaps the most controversial innovation lies in the clauses granting life-long constitutional protection to officers elevated to five-star ranks — field marshal, marshal of the air force, or admiral of the fleet.

These officers would "retain rank, privileges and remain in uniform for life", removable only through impeachment under Article 47 and protected by immunities "similar to those enjoyed by the president" under Article 248, applied mutatis mutandis.

The language is designed to legalise the extraordinary promotion of Gen Asim Munir to field marshal following the India-Pakistan confrontation in May this year.

What looks ceremonial on paper, however, amounts to a permanent legal armour around an unelected officeholder — "a parallel authority insulated from the very rule of law it is sworn to defend", as one constitutional lawyer puts it, asking not to be named.

Such provisions blur the line between honour and power.

"Even in the United States, the chairman of the joint chiefs does not wield absolute powers," notes Lt Gen Malik.

"Creating lifetime immunities for military officers upends the very idea of civilian supremacy". The supporters of the amendment, including government ministers, argue the changes merely formalise existing practices.

Yet the bill remains ambiguous about the tenure of the service chiefs.

Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik told reporters that there was "no need for a fresh notification" on the army chief's tenure, since existing legal provisions already establish a five-year term under the Army Act as amended by the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

But such reassurances overlook a deeper concern, which is that the proposed amendment will move the defence management from statute to constitutional entrenchment, making future civilian corrections exponentially harder.

Military affairs expert Muhammad Faisal, a doctoral researcher in Sydney, sees the bill as "the first phase" of a broader restructuring.

"There could be more updates coming with changes in the Army Act and NCA Acts to reflect new proposals," he says.

"This could also lead to the restructuring of strategic forces, currently administered by three services separately, into a unified single command."

That trajectory — toward centralisation rather than coordination — captures the tension at the heart of Pakistan's military politics. Every attempt at "jointness" risks hardening into hierarchy because institutional habits and prestige are resistant to reform.

The stakes are profound. The country's Constitution has endured repeated experiments in balancing military power and civilian authority.

A Chief of Defence Forces position can be created, as many democracies have done, through statutory reform subject to parliamentary review.

But embedding such a role in the Constitution transforms it from an administrative necessity into a permanent political reality, one that cannot easily be undone.

Ultimately, the question is not whether Pakistan needs a modernised defence structure. However, it definitely needs to be updated.

The question is whether modernisation must come at the cost of institutional equilibrium. History offers a cautionary note that once military power is constitutionalised, it rarely yields ground voluntarily.

Article 243 was meant to preserve civilian command over the armed forces. The 27th Amendment risks rewriting it into a charter of military supremacy.

27th Amendment rushed to Senate amid Opp outcry

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pass the amendments.

PTI parliamentary leader Barrister Ali Zafar argued that the debate on the bill was inappropriate in the absence of a notified leader of the opposition. He accused the government and its allies of being in a "hurry" to pass the amendments and suggested turning the Senate into a committee of the whole to discuss the draft.

Bill's features

Explaining salient features of the bill, the law minister said the idea of teh FCC had been agreed upon in the 2006 Charter of Democracy signed by the PPP and PML-N. He said the proposed court, comprising judges from all provinces, would hear constitutional matters, while the existing superior courts would continue to deal with other cases.

"During consultations on the 26th Amendment, some of our friends suggested we should ... instead experiment with constitutional benches," he recalled. Those benches, he said, had not reduced the backlog because judges sitting on them were also burdened with routine cases. "The fact of the matter is that five to six per cent of the cases take 40pc of the court's time," he added.

Turning to Article 243, which states that the federal government "shall have control and command of the armed forces", the minister said certain clauses were being inserted.

He confirmed that Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Staff Asim Munir had been awarded the title of field marshal. "This is a title, not a rank, not an appointment as such ... whereas army chief is an appointment with a five-year tenure," he said.

Moreover, the office of the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) would be abolished from Nov 27 after the incumbent retires. No new CJCSC would be appointed, as the COAS would assume the role of chief of defence forces.

The bill also proposes that the prime minister, on the COAS's recommendation, will appoint the commander of the National Strategic Command.

Reading from the bill, Mr Tarar said: "Where the federal government promotes a member of the armed forces to the (five-star) rank of field marshal, marshal of the air force or admiral of the fleet, such officer shall retain the rank, privileges and remain in uniform for life.

After their terms complete, the federal government will determine their responsibilities "in the interest of the state".

The bill also seeks to amend Article 248 to grant lifetime immunity to the president from any criminal proceedings or arrest — a protection that will continue to apply to governors only during their terms in office. Under the existing provision, both the president and governors are protected from prosecution only for the duration of their tenure.

On Senate elections, Mr Tarar noted that polls in KP were held after a delay of more than a year, and that the first order of business after any Senate election was the choice of chairman and deputy chairman. To avoid future disputes, he said, a clarifying clause had been introduced in the bill.

The minister said the draft also proposes raising the constitutional limit on provincial cabinets from 11pc to 13pc of a house's membership.

'Attack on Constitution'

Majlis-i-Wahdat-i-Muslimeen Senator Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, nominated by the PTI as leader of the opposition, questioned why such sweeping amendments were being brought in haste "in the absence of consensus".

He denounced the bill as an "attack on the Constitution", alleging that the present parliament was not truly representative of the people but "a product of Form 47" — a reference to alleged rigging in the 2024 general elections. He claimed the changes were designed to "disable the judiciary".

"We reject this dance to the tune of the powerful in the shape of these amendments. Have there been any amendments for the betterment of those who live in abject poverty?" he asked.

JUI-F Senator Kamran Murtaza said the 26th Amendment was effectively being reversed just 13 months after its passage.

Senator Sherry Rehman of PPP said that if the federation is now unable to meet its expenses, "we can all sit and figure out where the money is being wasted, not by cuts in the provinces".

"The PPP has always stood firm in defending the Constitution, the 18th Amendment and the rights of the federating units — and we continue to do so today. This bill does not in any way dilute the spirit of the 18th Amendment or undermine the foundations of the 1973 Constitution," she insisted. "Nothing is being reversed."

Awami National Party chief Senator Aimal Wali Khan said his party would support any move "in favour of the masses" and stressed that it was the government's prerogative to legislate. He invited opposition parties to join the parliamentary committee and "give their best input" on the bill.

Pakistan, US seek stronger partnership

Continued from Page 1

the relationship in trade, investment, and long-term development — not merely in aid or counterterrorism cooperation.

Late last month, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the US sees an opportunity to expand its strategic relationship with Pakistan, but added that the recent strengthening of ties between the two countries did not come at the expense of Washington's relationship with New Delhi.

In September, PM Shehbaz Sharif also met with Mr Trump in the Oval Office, where they discussed regional security and cooperation along the lines of counter-terrorism.

Mr Trump has continued to highlight his role in what he calls the prevention of a nuclear war in South Asia following the brief but intense military conflict between India and Pakistan earlier this year in May. During several public remarks, he has claimed that his administration's swift diplomatic engagement "stopped a nuclear conflict" after the two neighbours exchanged air strikes, and that Pakistan "shot down eight Indian planes".

While India has not confirmed Mr Trump's account, his repeated references to that episode reflect Washington's renewed interest in South Asian stability — and the value it assigns to maintaining direct communication with both capitals.

Despite the fresh tone, the relationship needs greater effort to sustain its current momentum. Washington continues to view Pakistan through a regional lens — balancing its strategic interests between India and China — while Islamabad seeks broader recognition of its economic and geopolitical relevance.

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